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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 75th MEETING

Chairman: Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 122: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN EL SALVADOR (continued) (A/C.5/47/L.40)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft resolution A/C.5/47/L.40, which she had submitted in her capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Committee and coordinator of the informal consultations.

2. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that the reference in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution should be to paragraph 9, not paragraph 10.

3. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) queried the inclusion of a paragraph 13 bis in the draft resolution.

4. The CHAIRMAN said that the numbering would be corrected by the editors.

5. Draft resolution A/C.5/47/L.40, as orally revised, was adopted.

AGENDA ITEM 123: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITY IN CAMBODIA (continued) (A/C.5/47/L.41)

6. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), introducing draft resolution A/C.5/47/L.41, said that the text followed the standard format for the financing of peace-keeping missions. In paragraph 4, the General Assembly would appropriate an amount of US$ 85 million to meet the additional requirements of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. Paragraph 9 requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session a detailed and up-to-date performance report on the budget of the Transitional Authority for the period from 1 November 1991 to the end of its mandate. Paragraphs 10 and 11 concerned the disposition of the property of the Transitional Authority. Paragraph 12 authorized the Secretary-General to use, on an extraordinary and temporary basis, an amount from the existing reserves equivalent to the pledges received. Finally, paragraph 13 invited Member States and other States in a position to do so to respond positively to the Secretary-General's appeal for voluntary contributions for the financial assistance to the Interim Joint Administration of Cambodia.

7. He commended delegations for the flexibility they had shown in accepting compromises, and expressed the hope that the draft resolution could be adopted without a vote.

8. Draft resolution A/C.5/47/L.41 was adopted without a vote.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 123.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Access to the United Nations garage

10. Mrs. WELLS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the decision to curtail the use of the United Nations garage had been taken exclusively for reasons of security. The decision was based on expert advice provided by outside authorities and by the Chief of the United Nations Security and Safety Service. The Organization had consulted United States authorities from a number of federal agencies, the New York City Police Department, structural engineers and bomb experts. At first, it had seemed that the garage might have to be closed entirely. After further review, however, it had been determined that security could still be maintained by significantly curtailing the use of the garage facilities. The tragic events that had taken place at the World Trade Center had illustrated the vulnerability of underground parking facilities. The inconvenience that might be caused by the security measures had to be weighed against the protection of life and property.

11. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that the United States, as a Member State and host country, was extremely concerned about security at the United Nations. He wondered, however, whether restricting access to the garage might actually encourage further terrorist activities. His delegation would appreciate clarification as to which United States authorities had been consulted and the input they had had. To his knowledge, neither New York City nor State Department and other United States Government officials had participated in the decision-making process. A report by the New York City Police Department did indeed recommend restrictions in the use of the garage, not the massive restrictions proposed by the Secretary-General. Moreover, a meeting between United Nations and United States Government officials to discuss the recommendations contained in that report had been held three days after the circular on parking restrictions was issued. That indicated that the host country had had no part in imposing the restrictions on the United Nations community.

12. His delegation also wished to know whether the Secretariat had looked into the security measures taken at comparable institutions in New York City which had underground garages, and whether the number of parking spaces reserved for Secretariat staff would also be reduced.

13. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that he looked forward to hearing the response to the questions asked by the representative of the host country, particularly whether government authorities had been consulted. His delegation recognized the importance of security at United Nations Headquarters, but was none the less surprised to see the Secretariat taking a measure that directly affected Members States without providing ample justification for doing so. He wondered whether there were any grounds for suspecting that a Member State might be involved in terrorist activities.

14. Lately, the Secretary-General seemed to be taking decisions without consulting Member States, for example, the recent decision to issue documentation in two of the official languages before the other language versions were ready. In the past, initiatives had always been presented to

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Member States as proposals for consideration and decision. While the Secretary-General, as chief administrative officer of the United Nations, was empowered to take decisions that affected the staff of the Organization, it was not clear that he could take decisions affecting Member States.

15. Mr. BOIN (France) said that his delegation did not doubt that the Secretary-General had sole authority to decide sensitive security matters or that his decision had been based on advice from anti-terrorist experts. The approval of the General Assembly was not necessary.

16. He wished to know if similar security measures would be taken on other United Nations premises such as the DC1 and DC2 buildings and the premises occupied by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund. His delegation strongly believed that the Secretariat staff should be accorded the same treatment as United Nations diplomats where parking was concerned.

17. Mr. OSELLA (Argentina) said that his delegation was concerned about the security situation, but felt that the Secretariat might be creating a new problem - namely, inadequate parking services - in the process of attempting to solve its security problem. His delegation also wished to know whether the Secretariat had requested New York City authorities to relax traffic regulations so that diplomats could park in the vicinity of the United Nations. Perhaps parking facilities at other United Nations premises could also be used.

18. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica) asked whether the garage would also be closed at night, and wondered whether ambassadors would be permitted to enter United Nations grounds in taxis if their vehicles were not available. It would be useful to know what security checks involved - e.g., opening boots or inspecting underneath vehicles - and whether the contents of delivery vehicles were verified against bills of lading.

19. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) supported the statement by the representative of France and said that, coming from a country where exceptional security measures had become routine, he understood the importance of guaranteeing security at the United Nations; it was a situation that had to be lived with.

20. Mr. TANG Guangting (China) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by previous speakers. Security measures were vital, but should not interfere with the normal functioning of the Organization. The Chinese Mission, for example, was located on the west side of Manhattan, which meant that it took more than 30 minutes to travel to Headquarters. If it had access to only two parking spaces, his delegation would be unable to attend meetings during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. He hoped that the Secretariat would take such difficulties into account.

21. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) asked whether precautions would also be taken at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

22. Mr. DIACTA (Algeria) said that his delegation pledged its cooperation in all measures to control terrorist activities but, like the Cuban delegation, believed that the General Assembly was the most appropriate forum for deciding on such measures. He wondered if thought had been given to the inconvenience the parking restrictions would cause, especially if representatives and staff members had to park outside the Secretariat building.

23. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said that his delegation looked forward to hearing the response to the questions asked by the representatives of the United States and Costa Rica. He drew attention to the inconvenience that would be caused to ministerial delegations whose members might have appointments both on and off United Nations premises at the same time. It was not necessarily clear how the two-car limitation would guarantee security, for the threat did not lie in quantity.

24. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) said that a balance must be struck between guaranteeing security and ensuring the proper functioning of the Organization, and it was not clear that the measures contemplated would truly ensure that balance. Curtailing parking facilities would affect the participation of delegations in the work of the Organization. Mexico, too, would be interested in knowing why the security measures were directed so specifically at delegations - i.e., if delegations were believed to be the cause of the security risk. Restrictions on secretariat staff and on visitors to the United Nations should be described, together with any qualitative controls that might be implemented beyond the two-car limitation. It would be regrettable if access by the general public was also to be restricted, for the United Nations would become a fortress cut off from the social context in which it was meant to operate.

25. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) agreed with the representative of Mexico that the United Nations should remain open to the public. The financial consequences of restricting public access, such as a decrease in the revenue generated by guided tours, must be borne in mind.

26. Mr. ELZIMAITY (Egypt) agreed that a balance must be struck between security and the efficient functioning of the Organization. Some ground rules must be laid in order to specify the relationship between the Secretariat and delegations in decision-making.

27. Mr. CHUINKAM (Cameroon) asked whether there was any evidence that members of the diplomatic corps in New York had been involved in either the World Trade Center bombing or alleged attempts to bomb the United Nations.

28. Mrs. WELLS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), replying to the representative of the United States, said that a series of consultations had been held with United States authorities from a number of federal agencies. Parking facilities at other institutions in New York City had not been surveyed because it was felt that those institutions did not have the same political concerns as the United Nations. United Nations security personnel had been given a tour by security personnel in Washington, D.C. and shown how to deal with terrorist threats. The New York Police Department had been one of the expert bodies consulted by the Secretariat, but not necessarily

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the main one. She emphasized again that specialists in structural engineering had been consulted.

29. Regarding the parking restrictions placed on Secretariat staff, she said that, under the two-car limitation, 370 spaces would be allotted for a total of 1,800 diplomats. The remaining spaces would be reserved for the 7,000 employees of the United Nations Secretariat, UNDP and UNICEF. That represented a significant reduction in the number of spaces available to staff members. Member States should bear in mind that only staff who lived outside Manhattan could obtain a permit and that staff members were subject to other requirements that did not apply to delegations. The decision had had nothing to do with suspicions that any delegations might be involved in terrorist activities. The aim had simply been to make less space available in the garage, for reasons on which she preferred not to elaborate.

30. Replying to the representative of Cuba, she said that the Secretariat decision concerning documentation had been taken because there were no funds. In fact, she was preparing a circular to inform staff members that cash flow problems might make it necessary to eliminate mid-month payments in October.

31. Replying to the representative of France, she said that the Secretariat did not control the garages in other buildings because it did not own them. It was cooperating with the landlords and security personnel of those buildings.

32. Some delegations had complained that they were being discriminated against in spot security checks on entering the garage. Since it would be unwieldy to inspect every vehicle entering the garage, a system had been devised so that the pattern of inspection from day to day would not be revealed. The contents of all vehicles making deliveries were inspected by security officers and checked against bills of lading.

33. Replying to the representative of Costa Rica, she said that night parking would be limited to delegations with medallions and to essential personnel such as the print shop staff, translators, security guards and cleaners. Parking spaces had been limited to two per delegation because there was less space available under the security measures taken.

34. Replying to the representative of Canada, she said that security measures would be implemented at Vienna, Geneva and other duty stations around the world as required, based on expert advice.

35. Replying to the Argentine inquiry, she said that permission to park outside the United Nations grounds had been requested at a meeting held with New York City authorities and a member of the United States Mission. The Secretariat was awaiting a reply.

36. Regrettably, it would be necessary to restrict public access to the United Nations, including guided tours, in the very near future. She cared deeply about the image of the United Nations, but unfortunately, it had to be recognized that the Organization's situation had changed in the past two

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decades. The security measures implemented would be reviewed at the end of the year, but she could not promise that they would be lifted. They had been taken bearing in mind the nature of the United Nations and the fact that Heads of State would be arriving for the general debate during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Financial implications had not been a factor, but delegations might wish to note that closure of the garage would mean a loss of $40,000 per month in revenue from staff parking; the loss from night parking would be insignificant. Lastly, a number of delegations had asked about possible involvement of diplomats in terrorist activities in New York. At present, the United Nations had no knowledge of any such involvement.

37. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that, while she did not question the genuine nature of the security threat, she was not convinced that the measures struck an appropriate balance, bearing in mind also that the garage had always been a successful revenue-generating operation. The decision to limit access to the garage had been prompted by the concern that, if all the available space were used, the Organization would be vulnerable to an explosive device. Surely it would be more sensible to improve security at the entrance to the garage and to step up patrolling and the checking of vehicles. She would welcome information concerning the origin of the recommendation to limit access to the garage, since it had been established that no United States federal agency had been involved. She also wondered why Member States had not been consulted in any way.

38. Her delegation was also concerned that the catering company responsible for operating the delegates' dining room was in the habit of providing services for special events involving outsiders in no way connected with the Organization, a fact which represented a potential security threat.

39. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) said that he was deeply concerned at the absence of dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States on the question of parking space. The measures had simply been announced by letter with no opportunity for delegations to express their views, no consultations and no explanations. Clearly the Fifth Committee had an important role to play, since it was competent for all administrative matters within the Secretariat. He was also concerned that the documentation on the matter had been issued only in English and French. He failed to understand why it was necessary to restrict access to the garage, rather than improve security within the garage itself. Consultations were needed in order to reach a more appropriate solution.

40. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, according to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, guided tours of the building were to be restricted. He would like to know the financial implications of that decision, since any decrease in the income of the Organization would need to be offset.

41. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) asked what kind of selection and scrutiny procedures were applied for vehicles of staff members having access to the garage. He would also like to know what was to be done with the space left empty as a result of the restrictions on access.

42. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that, according to the Under-Secretary-General, garage spaces were made available to Secretariat staff living outside Manhattan. She wondered whether the same consideration could be given to delegations whose missions were located at a distance from the United Nations. She felt that more space should be allocated for delegations than for staff members. She also wondered whether the New York City authorities had been approached regarding alternative measures for parking on the streets in the vicinity of the Headquarters complex.

43. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) welcomed the assurances given by the Under-Secretary-General that the measures would be reviewed once the special conditions prevailing during the General Assembly no longer applied. There was a general willingness among delegations to cooperate in strengthening security, but consideration needed to be given to the degree of inconvenience caused: perhaps the Secretariat should look again at the allocation of space among the various groups using the garage facility. Consideration should also be given to drive-through access, whereby representatives could be dropped off and collected without the need for vehicles to enter the garage. The Secretariat should do all in its power to minimize the adverse effects of security measures on the work of delegations.

44. Mr. STAVRINOS (Cyprus) said that he would welcome an explanation of the decision to keep one floor of the garage empty, since the bombing incident at the World Trade Center had shown that the consequences of any such attack would not be limited to a single floor. He also wondered why the Secretariat was in such a hurry to adopt measures without consulting Member States.

45. Mr. VARELA (Chile) regretted the lack of communication and dialogue on what was after all a shared problem. As the garage was not normally full, perhaps some system of rotation could be devised among delegations. In any case, there was a need for ongoing dialogue between the Secretariat and the Member States.

46. Mrs. WELLS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that measures had already been taken to restrict the use of the delegates' dining room for special events, and such operations would be severely curtailed during the General Assembly. However, the Secretariat was doing all in its power to maintain the image of the Organization, and security in the delegates' dining area was in any case much easier to ensure than in the garage. The recommendations for restricting access had been made by the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization on the basis of the best available advice, including in particular that of a structural engineer. Restricting access to the garage was preferable to total closure. Other security options such as the use of guard dogs had been investigated, but had proved to be prohibitively expensive.

47. Some delegations had complained of a lack of dialogue and consultation, but it was simply not possible to divulge specific details relating to security matters. However, dialogue was indeed called for concerning the implementation of the decisions, and in that connection she welcomed the proposals made by various delegations, particularly the suggestion by the representative of the United Kingdom concerning drive-through access. The documentation had been issued in English and French first, since those were the working languages. Issuing the document simultaneously in all official languages would have

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involved substantial expenditure on overtime. She felt that the question of the parking needs occasioned by the location of different missions within the city could be given further consideration. Details concerning the income generated by guided tours were not available at present, but the decision to limit their operation had been taken entirely on security grounds. The controls to which staff vehicles were subject were exactly the same as those for delegations. She did not wish to comment on the use to be made of the space made available by restricting access to the garage, since it would involve displaying the Organization's security problems in too wide a forum.

48. The Secretariat had discussed with the New York City authorities alternative arrangements for parking in the vicinity of the United Nations, and a response was expected in the near future. It was wrong to imagine that the decisions were being taken in a hurry. Experts had been consulted and their advice was now being acted upon. The imminence of the General Assembly meant that there was no time to lose. Finally, there was no reason to give preference to delegations over staff in the allocation of parking spaces in the garage.

49. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) drew attention to rule 51 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, which stipulated that Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish were both the official and the working languages of the General Assembly, its committees and its subcommittees. English and French were the working languages of the Secretariat, not of the General Assembly and, while it was acceptable for internal documents to be issued in those two languages only, documents which were to be the subject of debate by the General Assembly and its committees must be available in all the working languages. The equality of languages was a fundamental principle.

50. Mr. BLUKIS (Latvia) noted that, following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Member States had indicated their interest in modes of transport other than the automobile, which seemed to be the standard mode of transport for delegations attending meetings at Headquarters. It would be useful, for example, to provide space in the garage for the parking of bicycles and scooters.

51. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that he welcomed the Secretariat's decision to suspend public tours of the building, which had had operating losses during the previous several years. In his delegation's view, the sale of publications should also be suspended, since that operation was also losing money. On the other hand, the garage facility was not a money-losing concern, and there was therefore no reason to limit access to the garage. The host Government was nevertheless seeking to make alternative parking arrangements. Its efforts were hampered, however, by the failure of the Secretariat to discuss its proposed restrictions beforehand and by his Government's own bureaucratic procedures. He wished also to make it clear that the standard penalties would apply for illegal parking in the area of the United Nations Headquarters, and the cars of delegations thus parked would be towed away.

52. Mr. AHMED (Iraq) observed that the restriction of access to the garage would affect both Secretariat staff and delegations. On the question of the availability of documents in all the official languages, he shared the view expressed by the delegation of Cuba. Indeed, his delegation would be unable to participate in meetings at which documents were not available in all official languages.

53. Mr. TANG Guangting (China) reiterated his previous remarks about the problems the parking restrictions would pose for his delegation, adding that its difficulties would be compounded by the fact that the various committees and working groups began their work at different times. In his view, the Committee should not adopt at the current stage any new decisions regarding access to the garage.

54. With regard to the statement by the Under-Secretary-General concerning the publication of documents only in the two working languages, he drew attention to rule 56 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which provided that all resolutions and other documents should be published in the languages of the General Assembly.

55. Mr. FRANCIS (Australia) said that, while he understood the security concerns that had prompted the Secretariat's decision on access to the garage, he wondered whether they could not be addressed by strengthening the perimeter security arrangements. His delegation, for example, would have no objection to being searched before entering the garage. He would welcome a response from the Secretariat to his suggestion prior to the commencement of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

56. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) asked whether the Secretariat would show flexibility in enforcing the proposed new parking arrangements when more than one high-level official from a Member State visited the United Nations simultaneously.

57. Mrs. WELLS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that a number of delegations seemed to have misinterpreted the Secretary-General's statement concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in the six official languages of the Organization. There was no question of discontinuing the publication of documents in all of the official languages. It was proposed, however, to discontinue the practice of withholding the release of documents in the working languages until all language versions became available, a practice which had proved to be very costly to the Organization.

58. She welcomed the suggestion concerning alternative modes of transport to Headquarters. Arrangements could no doubt be made to accommodate scooters and bicycles in the garage should representatives choose those forms of transport to attend meetings.

59. The decision to suspend the guided tours had been taken for security reasons. To ensure adequate security, each tour group would require the presence of two guards.

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60. On the question of whether or not the garage was losing money, she would need to ascertain its operating costs in order to determine what revenues, if any, the garage produced. In that connection, she was pleased to learn that the host country was attempting to make alternative parking arrangements for delegations.

61. A number of measures were being taken to strengthen perimeter security, including video surveillance of the fence and the introduction of a motorized scooter patrol.

62. She wished to assure the delegation of Pakistan that the Secretariat would show flexibility when several high-ranking officials from a Member State visited the United Nations at the same time.

63. Finally, the Secretariat would also look into the possibility of making adjustments to the new regulations in the case of those missions which were located relatively far away from Headquarters.

64. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that he would welcome information from the Secretariat on measures that were being taken to restrict access to parking at other United Nations duty stations away from Headquarters. He also wished to know whether the question of security would arise in determining the venues for United Nations conferences throughout the world. In addition, he would welcome a report on the implementation of the new electronic pass system, including the amount of money spent thus far. Finally, he welcomed the Secretariat's assurances that the arrangements for strengthening security at the delegates' entrance would be completed before the start of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

65. His delegation, together with a number of other interested delegations, had prepared the text of a draft resolution in which the General Assembly would decide that the existing degree of access to the United Nations garage facility by authorized users prior to 15 September 1993 should be maintained unless otherwise decided by the General Assembly. It would also request the Secretary-General to present proposals to the General Assembly, as appropriate, on measures to improve security at Headquarters after prior consultations with delegations and staff members. He hoped that members could agree on a consensus text as soon as possible through informal consultations.

66. Mrs. WELLS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that measures to improve security at duty stations away from Headquarters would be taken as the situation warranted. She would return to the question of the electronic pass system at a later stage. Finally, she was pleased to announce that the cement workers' strike, which had held up work on the sidewalk outside the main building, had just ended and that work on the project would recommence shortly.

67. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) sought clarification as to whether the draft text prepared by the delegation of the United States was a draft resolution sponsored in accordance with the rules of procedure. If that were not so, he failed to see how the draft could be the object of informal consultations.

68. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation was willing to be flexible with regard to the procedures for considering the proposed draft text. He believed that it would be useful to have informal consultations on the text, but if the Committee decided otherwise, his delegation would not insist on such consultations.

69. Mr. BOIN (France) said that his delegation was unable to support paragraph 1 of the draft text proposed by the United States, since decisions pertaining to security were within the exclusive competence of the Secretary-General. His delegation would certainly not be prepared to support a decision which might be responsible for future incidents that led to injury or death. Moreover, the delegation of the United States should not be attempting to micro-manage the Secretariat. Informal consultations were therefore essential, and his delegation would of course consult with its Government on the matter.

70. Mr. FONTAINE-ORTIZ (Cuba) observed that, while consultations on draft resolutions were useful, they were not required under the rules of procedure. In view of the absence of agreement on the current draft text, however, consultations were clearly needed. A definite time-frame should be established for such consultations so that a final decision could be adopted before 15 September 1993. For its part, his delegation supported the draft resolution proposed by the United States.

71. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that, while the Secretary-General was indeed responsible for security matters, he wished to point out that the conspiracy to bomb the Headquarters building had been uncovered by competent employees of the United States Government. That fact demonstrated the commitment of the host Government to protect the United Nations. If the Committee was unable to adopt the proposed draft, then his delegation would insist that restrictions be imposed on entry to the garage of duty stations at all locations. It would also request that the venue of the International Conference on Population and Development should be changed from Cairo for reasons of security. While his Government fully intended to participate in the Cairo Conference, it would insist that decisions of the Secretariat should not be implemented on a selective basis.

72. The CHAIRMAN suggested that one round of informal consultations might be held to see if there was any likelihood of agreement being reached.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.